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Metadiscourse in Newspaper Genre: a Cross-linguistic Study of English and Persian Editorials

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Abstract

The original impetus for this cross-linguistic study came from a need to explore the effect of cultural factors and generic conventions on the use and distribution of metadiscourse within a single genre. To this end, the study as a contrastive rhetoric research examined a corpus of 60 newspaper editorials (written in English and Persian) culled from 10 elite newspapers in America and Iran. Based on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, both interactive and interactional metadiscursive resources were analysed. The results disclosed that genre conventions had a determining role in the writers' choice of some metadiscourse resources that contributed to some similarities in the use and distribution of metadiscourse resources across English and Persian data. In addition, some differences were found between two sets of editorials which were attributed to cultural/linguistic backgrounds of both groups of editorialists. The interactional category and attitude markers proved to be, respectively the predominant metadiscourse category and subcategory in newspaper editorials genre. Overall, the findings suggested that metadiscourse has a decisive role in construction of persuasion in newspaper editorials genre.

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1. Introduction

The social view of written communication suggests that the text is a site where the writer and the reader are engaged in dialogic interactions based on shared interpretive practices. Fowler (1991) considers the text as co-produced by writer and reader, negotiating the nature and significance of a piece of language, on the basis of their more or less shared knowledge of the world, society and language itself. In a similar vein, Hyland (2005) rightly

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contends that writing is never neutral but always *engaged* in that it realizes the interests, the positions, the perspectives and values of those who enact them. Therefore, an author who articulates meaning must consider its social influence and the impact that it has on those who interpret the meaning, the readers who are the audiences for the communication. Metadiscourse is one of the main means which allows the author to accomplish this. It involves writers and their readers in mutual acts of comprehension and involvement (Hyland, 2005). Writers use metadiscourse to direct their readers and display an appropriate professional persona in order to persuade their readers, as such metadiscourse is an important feature of persuasive writing (Hyland, 1998a). Thus, persuasive writings can be regarded as the prime objects for metadiscourse investigations.

Many authors tacitly or explicitly appreciate the fact that newspapers form a genre (e.g. Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Bhatia, 1993; Shams, 2005). Abdollahzadeh (2007) considers newspaper genre as a sociocultural activity in which the writer summarizes and critiques events of importance to the public. This painstaking activity demands the writer to look persuasive and requires them to play it safe to maintain, or oppose a stance, or raise awareness towards a critical and controversial issue. To this end, they utilize metadiscourse to organize their texts and convey their personality, credibility, and consideration of the reader (Abdollahzadeh, 2007).

Moreover, it is generally accepted that “writing is a cultural object” (Moreno, 1997:5). According to Robert Kaplan’s (1966) contrastive rhetoric, language and writing are cultural phenomena. A direct consequence of this idea is that each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it (Connor, 1996). Thus, it seems metadiscourse use will vary cross-culturally in different genres. Ansary and Babaii (2009) consider newspaper editorials as a particularly interesting genre to study cross-culturally because they found them persuasive, public and probably representative both of local cultures and of ideological proclivities.

To put it in a nutshell, there might be differences in the rhetorical pattern of the same text written in different languages. Referring to the fact that the means of doing persuasion differ across genres, Hyland (2005) points out that editorials use metadiscourse in their own ways to persuade the readers through argument. Therefore, it seems that there should be a particular genre convention in terms of the use and distribution of metadiscourse belonging to editorials genre. On the other hand, thanks to the finding of contrastive rhetoric, it can be claimed that metadiscourse use will vary in editorials written in different languages. Thus, cross-linguistic research on metadiscourse in editorials genre would yield interesting results.

1.1. Review of literature

Studying metadiscourse is already a consolidated research strand, and there is a rich vein of research done in this area. However, it appears that research on metadiscourse is mostly conducted on genres other than newspaper genre, including research articles (e.g., Hyland, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Valero-Garces, 1996; Dahl, 2004), textbooks (e.g., Hyland, 1994, 1999, 2000; Kuhi & Behnam, 2010), and dissertations (e.g., Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004), company annual reports (Hyland, 1998b), casual conversation (Schiffrin, 1980), and advertisements (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristan, Arribas-Bano and Samaniego-Fernandez, 2001). However, only very few metadiscourse studies set newspaper genre as their research corpus (Dafouz, 2003, 2008; Le, 2004; Abdollahzadeh, 2007; Noorian & Biria, 2010). To our knowledge, the only study that sought to study metadiscourse use cross-linguistically in English and Persian newspaper editorials is Abdollahzadeh (2007). Regrettably, there seems to be a dearth of research on metadiscourse use in newspaper editorials in general and cross-linguistic research on metadiscourse in this genre in particular.

The need to fill the gap that exists in the studies on metadiscourse was the original impetus for the present research. The study intended to investigate this prospect and determine predominantly used metadiscourse categories and sub-categories in English and Persian newspaper editorials and to examine the probable differences and/or similarities in the distribution and use of metadiscourse resources in these texts. As such, the study is one of the few studies which explore a comprehensive range of metadiscourse markers across English and Persian in a

single genre, and to date, it appears to be the only one that addresses the whole range of metadiscourse in Persian and English newspaper genre.

1.2. Theoretical background

The concept of metadiscourse, according to Hyland (2005), was first introduced by Zelling Hariss in 1959 “to offer a way of understanding language in use, representing a writer’s or speaker’s attempts to guide a receiver’s perception of a text” (Hyland 2005:3). However, it was neglected during 1960s and 1970s. Later in the 1980s, as a reaction to a strong emphasis on the propositional aspect of language, metadiscourse resurfaced and gained attention and become the subject of the study for some scholars (e.g. Williams, 1981; Vande Kopple, 1985, and Crismore, 1983). Hyland (2010) came to appreciate that metadiscourse emerged as a corrective to earlier views of language which considered language as primarily a propositional and expository mode of representation, where the function of communication was to match words to ideas.

Metadiscourse is essentially an open category (Hyland, 2005) which can be realized in numerous ways. Therefore, a variety of metadiscourse taxonomies have been proposed by researchers in the field (e.g. Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen, 1993; Hyland, 1998a, 1999; Dafouze, 2003; Hyland & Tse, 2004, and Adel, 2006). Influenced by Halliday’s (1994) Systemic Functional approach to language, researchers in the area of metadiscourse commonly consider two main categories for metadiscourse, namely textual and interpersonal. This dual categorization of metadiscourse is reflected in most of the taxonomies of metadiscourse. However, Hyland and Tse (2004) explicitly rejected the strict duality of textual and interpersonal functions found in much of the metadiscourse studies (e.g., Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 1998 a, 1999). Considering all metadiscourse as interpersonal, Hyland (2005) propose a theoretically robust and analytically reliable model of metadiscourse which is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Hyland’s Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse (2005:49)

Category	Function	Example
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	express relations between main clauses	in addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	finally; to conclude; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	noted above; see Fig; in section 2
Evidentials	refer to information from other texts	according to X; Z states
Cod glosses	elaborate propositional meanings	namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	withhold commitment and open dialogue	might; perhaps; possible; about
Boosters	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
Attitude markers	express writer’s attitude to proposition	unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
Self-mentions	explicit references to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	explicitly build relationship with reader	consider; note; you can see that

Hyland’s (2005) model comprises two general types of metadiscourse: *interactive* and *interactional* metadiscourse. According to Hyland (2005), interactive resources are those features that are used to organize propositional content in ways that “a projected target audience” is likely to perceive as coherent and convincing. On the other hand, interactional resources are those features that involve readers and create opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by informing them about writer’s perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves.

1.3. The present study

Contrastive studies are of particular importance for the understanding of cultural particulars as well as linguistic universals. Pery-Woodley (1990) believes that contrastive approaches not only show a particular practice as specific to a group but also they allow the identification of universals. In other words, a contrastive stance is both a superlative way of gaining precise descriptive knowledge about individual languages and cultures and at the same time invaluable in general understanding of language-based communication (cited in Connor, 1996:6). Thus, contrastive analysis of metadiscourse- a linguistic phenomenon which provides a framework for understanding communication as social engagement (Hyland, 2005) - in different genres across different cultures and languages would be of a prime importance.

Bhatia (1993) points out that the existence of wide variety of genres within a newspaper (such as headlines, news reports, sports reports, editorials, etc.) makes the language of newspaper attractive. Amongst this genres, editorials might be the most appropriate to serve as the data for a contrastive analysis of metadiscourse. In addition, the study of editorials, more than other genres such as research articles and theses, might shed illuminating light on some marked cross-cultural similarities and differences and give interesting insights because the rhetorical patterns of one's native culture-linguistic system are likely to be more pronounced in texts such as editorials than in research articles and theses (Ansary & Babaii, 2009). Having seen from such a perspective, a cross-cultural or cross-linguistic study of metadiscourse in English and Persian newspaper editorials would yield very interesting and invaluable insights into the metadiscourse area.

2. Method

2.1. Corpus

The corpus of this study was a set of English and Persian data composed of 60 newspaper editorials (30 written in American-English and 30 in Persian). As in the case of other comparative and contrastive studies, ensuring the comparability of the two corpora of the study is of primary importance. Many discourse analysts (e.g. Dafouz, 2003; Thompson, 2001; Hyland, 1999) point out that the topic of a text may influence the type and frequency of metadiscourse categories found in the text. Therefore, in order to meet this comparability requirement, the editorials in both groups were selected from a diverse and different range of topics including social, political, economic, cultural, and world events; that is, editorials of two languages were matched in terms of topics.

The data collection for our research consisted of retrieving a large portion of editorials from the electronic version of elite and influential American-English and Persian newspapers in the United States and Iran through the internet. Due to the research aims it was determined that there had to be several newspapers serving as the database for the study. In more precise terms, the editorials of different newspapers are quite diverse in their styles or textual strategies (Fowler, 1991; Shams, 2005); therefore, in order to reduce stylistic influence of editorialists and newspapers in the analysis, an extended scope of data -10 newspapers (5 in English and 5 in Persian) - were selected. English newspapers include: *The Los Angeles Times* (latimes.com), *The New York Times* (nytimes.com), *USA Today* (usatoday.com), *Washington Post* (washingtonpost.com), and *The Washington Times* (washingtontimes.com). Persian newspapers are: *Afarinesh* (afarineshdaily.ir), *Iran* (iran-newspaper.com), *Jomhourie Eslami* (jomhourieslami.com), *Keyhan* (keyhnnews.ir), and *Mardomsalari* (mardomsalari.com). Adel (2006) believes that cultural conventions differ not only across different languages, but also they tend to be different across varieties of English. Hence, in order to avoid the potential effects of this factor on the results and findings of the study, only American-English newspapers were included in the data.

In order to ensure that diachronic changes do not affect the selected editorials, only editorials published in the period between two first months of 2012 (January and February) was included in the sample. Bearing in mind the offer mentioned variable involved in the writing of the texts, namely topic, altogether a corpus of 60 editorials, 30 in English and 30 in Persian was culled from the selected editorials for a close contrastive analysis.

2.2. Instrumentation

The analysis in this research was based on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse in academic texts. The rationale for choosing the model was that it is a robust, explicit and useful model of metadiscourse.

2.3. Procedure and analysis

After retrieving editorials from newspaper web sites and selecting the ones which compose the corpus of the study, the items considered to be metadiscourse were identified and categorized in the texts based on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, however, the analysis was not limited to predetermined search items; other possible realizations frequently occurring in the analyzed text were also taken into account. Given the highly contextual nature of metadiscourse and the fact that a particular form can serve either a propositional or metadiscoursal function (Hyland, 2004; 2005), a context-sensitive analysis of each marker was carried out. After analyzing the data, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of different types of metadiscourse categories and to compare and contrast the two sets of data. Since it was not possible to have texts with exactly the same length, the results were standardized to a common basis by applying 1000-word approach (elements per 1000 words) to compare the frequency of occurrence.

3. Results

The quantitative analysis revealed that overall incidence of metadiscourse resources in two groups of editorials- English and Persian editorials- was similar. Interactional resources in both sets of corpus outnumbered the interactive ones. In more precise words, both English and Persian editorials contained more interactional resources (respectively, 64.61% and 61.83%) than interactive resources (respectively, 35.39% and 38.17%). Interestingly, both groups did not differ much in terms of utilizing these resources.

Table 2. Categorical distribution and percentages of metadiscourse resources in English and Persian editorials.

Metadiscourse Resources		English		Persian	
Interactive	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
Transitions	19.50	21.91	26.32	28.33	
Frame markers	0.63	0.71	3.09	3.32	
Endophoric markers	0	0	0.21	0.23	
Evidentials	6.46	7.26	4.51	4.85	
Code glosses	8.80	9.89	4.04	4.35	
Total	35.39	39.77	38.17	41.08	
Interactional	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
Hedges	19.84	22.30	9.68	10.42	
Boosters	10.92	12.27	14.54	15.66	
Attitude markers	27.56	30.97	29.77	32.04	
Self-mentions	0.17	0.19	1.35	1.45	
Engagement markers	6.12	6.87	6.49	6.99	
Total	64.61	72.6	61.83	66.56	
Totals	100	112.37	100	107.64	

As tabulated above (Table 2), subcategory of transitions, among sub-categories of interactive resources, was the most frequently used resources in both groups of editorials. In the case of English corpus, transitions (21.91 per thousand words) are followed by code glosses (9.89 per thousand words), evidentials (7.26 per thousand words), and frame markers (0.71 per thousand words), whereas in Persian corpus evidentials (4.85 per thousand words) appear in the second position in interactive category, followed by code glosses (4.35 per thousand words), frame markers (3.32 per thousand words), and endophoric markers (0.23 per thousand words) which were absent from English group.

Concerning interactional category, results uncovered that attitude markers appeared in the first position in both English and Persian editorials, though the Persian group exploited these resources slightly more than the English group (32.04 vs. 30.97 per thousand words). However, the two groups differed in the use of second most frequent sub-category of these resources. This position was allocated to hedges (22.30 per thousand words) in English corpus, followed by boosters (12.27 per thousand words), while boosters (15.66 per thousand words) were the second most frequently utilized interactional resource in Persian data, followed by hedges (10.42 per thousand words). It is worth noting that, engagement markers and self-mentions were respectively in the next positions in both groups of editorials. However, Persian group slightly outnumbered its English counterpart both in the use of engagement markers (6.99 vs. 6.87 per thousand words) and self-mentions (1.45 vs. 0.19 per thousand words). Figure 1 depicts all these significant details in a more tangible way.

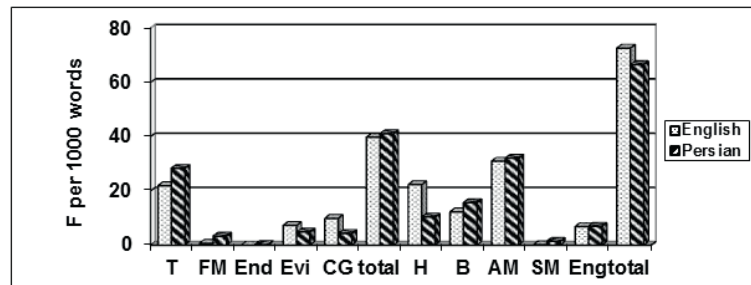


Figure 1. Categorical distribution and percentages of metadiscourse resources in English and Persian editorials

Note: F=Frequency, T=Transitions, FM=Frame markers, End=Endophoric markers, Evi=Evidentials, CG=Code glosses, H=Hedges, B=Boosters, AM=Attitude markers, SM=Self mentions, Eng=Engagement markers

3.1. The ranked frequency of metadiscourse resources in English and Persian editorials

In order to have a clear-cut comparison of the distribution of metadiscourse resources between English and Persian editorials and steer more towards the first research question of the study, that is, to find out about the predominant metadiscourse categories and sub-categories in English and Persian newspaper editorials, a ranked comparison of all metadiscourse resources in both groups of data seemed necessary. An overall ranked comparison of the frequency of metadiscourse resources in two groups of editorials, regardless of their main categories, is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. The ranked frequency of metadiscourse resources in English and Persian editorials

English Newspaper Editorials	Persian Newspaper Editorials
1. Attitude markers (30.97)	1. Attitude markers (32.04)
2. Hedges (22.30)	2. Transitions (28.33)
3. Transitions (21.91)	3. Boosters (15.66)
4. Boosters (12.27)	4. Hedges (10.42)
5. Code glosses (9.89)	5. Endophoric markers (6.99)
6. Evidentials (7.26)	6. Evidentials (4.85)
7. Engagement markers (6.87)	7. Code glosses (4.35)
8. Frame markers (0.71)	8. Frame markers (3.32)
9. Self-mentions (0.19)	9. Self-mentions (1.45)
10. Endophoric markers (0)	10. Endophoric markers (0.23)

As you can observe, attitude markers stand in the first place of the table. They were the most frequently used resources both by English and Persian editorialists (respectively, 30.97 and 32.04 per thousand words). According to the table, two groups differ after this point; attitude markers are followed by hedges (22.30 per thousand words), a sub-category of interactional category, in English editorials, whereas it is followed by transitions (28.33 per thousand words), a subcategory of interactive category, in Persian editorials. The two groups also differed in the use of third most frequent sub-category of metadiscourse resources. In English group, this position is allocated to transitions (21.91 per thousand words), followed by boosters (12.27 per thousand words) and code glosses (9.89) while in the Persian group the position is occupied by boosters (15.66 per thousand words), followed by hedges (10.42) and engagement markers (6.99 per thousand words). Two groups reach to a common point one more time; as it is clear from the table, the sixth position of the ranked frequency of metadiscourse resources belongs to evidentials in both English and Persian group. However, evidentials (7.26 per thousand words) are followed by engagement markers (6.87 per thousand words) in English set and by code glosses (4.35 per thousand words) in Persian set. Frame markers (0.71 per thousand words in English and 3.32 in Persian) and self-mentions (0.19 per thousand words in English and 1.45 in Persian) were respectively the two lesser frequent metadiscourse resources used by both groups of editorialists. Endophoric markers which were absent from English data, constituted the less frequent sub-category used in Persian data.

4. Discussion

Results of the study showed that editorialists of both sets of data used metadiscourse resources in their articles. This preliminary finding shows that editorialists in both languages were apparently aware of the significant role of metadiscourse in persuasive writings (Hyland, 2005). Both groups used metadiscourse to explicitly signal text organization, evaluate its contents and persuade their readers.

In both groups, interactive metadiscourse category, that is, explicit signals of the relationship between ideas and the organisation and clarification of ideational material, was used less frequently than interactional resources which are considered as central aspects of reader–writer dialogue (Abdollahzadeh, 2010). Moreover, both groups used these features almost with the same frequency and did not differ much. This shows that for both English and Persian editorialists, the relationship that is to be established between the writer and reader overrides comprehensibility of text and guiding the reader through the reading process. This finding might be attributed to the genre conventions of editorials in general. Although the editorialists in the two languages may have different strategies in using some sub-types of metadiscourse due to their cultural differences, with regard to the interactive and interactional category in general, they somewhat follow the same disciplinary culture and write within a unique framework identified by the genre. However, it is possible that one fact that may explain the underuse of interactive category compared to interactional category in both groups is that the cultural norms of both groups conformed to the norms and conventions of editorials genre. In other words, the results suggest that in newspaper editorials interacting with readers is more important than text organization.

Interactional metadiscourse is a feature of overtly argumentative and persuasive genres (Hyland, 2005), therefore, it is not surprising to find that it makes up a larger portion of metadiscourse resources in editorials genre. Similarly, Dafouz (2003) highlighting the explicit persuasive nature of interpersonal (interactional in Hyland's category) metadiscourse, states that interpersonal metadiscourse “construct a textual persona that appears attractive, convincing and reliable to the reader” (Dafouz, 2003:33). Hence, the findings suggest that the American and Iranian editorialists opt for the use of more interactional metadiscourse than interactive to gain acceptance and solidarity with their readers in order to persuade them (the chief aim of every editorialist).

Results showed that the subcategory of transition markers, among sub-categories of interactive resources, was the most frequently used resources in both groups of editorials. Among the interactive resources, transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, and code glosses are thought to have guiding and facilitating functions. Transitions meet these goals by signaling addition, comparison, causative relations, and contrast (Kuhi and Behnam, 2010). The

presence of transitions in both groups of data, therefore, is natural since these items function as a means of providing cohesion to the texts. Following are some examples of this sub-category found in English and Persian data studied. Persian examples are transcribed into Roman characters, and literal translations are given for them.

(a) **Furthermore**, scientific publication is increasingly moving to the Internet, expanding accessibility. (*The New York Times*, 5 January 2012)

(b) اما بخش دیگری از این دلایل به مسائل روانشناختی و اجتماعی برمیگردد. (Afarinesh, 16 February 2012)

[**ammâ** baxše digari az in dalâyl be masâle ravânšenaxti va ejtemâ'i barmigardad]

[**But** another part of these reasons goes back to the psychological and social issues.]

As regards the most frequent sub-category of metadiscourse, results uncovered that attitude markers form the most frequent metadiscourse strategy both within interactional category and metadiscourse resources in general (in both English and Persian corpus), confirming their role in persuasive texts. According to Hyland (2005), attitude markers provide an opportunity for writers to signal an assumption of shared attitudes, values and reactions to material, thereby express a position and suck readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to disagree such opinions. In this way these devices assist writers in accomplishing their main goals in persuasive writings i.e., persuading their readers. Following examples are some indicators of these devices in the corpus of the study.

(a) **Not bad**, if every athlete got a degree. (*USA Today*, 12 January 2012)

(b) متأسفانه آنچه که این روزها بعضاً در فضای رسانه ای و موضعگیری برخی سیاستیون مشاهده می شود روندی بر خلاف مصالح و منافع ملی است. (Iran, 15 January 2012)

[**mota'ssefâne** ânçe ke in ruzhâ ba'zan dar fazâye resânei va moze'girie barxi siâsiyun mošâhede mišavad ravandi barxelâfe masâleh va manâfe'e melli ast]

[**Unfortunately**, what is sometimes observed these days in media sphere and some politicians' positioning is a procedure against the national interests and benefits.]

The findings, therefore, indicate that both set of writers in the genre of editorials were aware of the persuading power of these metadiscursive devices and attached prime importance to their use in their writings. Moreover, approximately similar distribution of attitude markers across Persian and English languages shows that these markers played a decisive role equally in American and Iranian editorials' attempt in persuading their readers regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, one may conclude here that heavy use of attitude markers is expected to be an inherent characteristic of editorials genre.

The findings revealed an interesting difference from a cross-linguistic angle. Persian editorials contained about half of the hedges of the English editorials. Hedges indicate a weakening of a claim through an explicit qualification of the writer's commitment to show doubt and indicate that information is offered as opinion rather than qualified fact (Hyland, 1998b). Hyland (1994: 241) contends that "in persuasive writing, hedges are an important means of both supporting the writer's position and building writer-reader relationships". Some clear cases of these devices in the studied corpus are provided below:

(a) **Probably** it is one feature of U.S. capitalism that makes our system more flexible and capable of "creative destruction" than Europe's. (*The Washington Post*, 11 January 2012)

(b) شاید از این راه سود کلانی نصیب دولت شود اما به واقع این افزایش قیمت دلار فاتحه ای بر فعالیت تولید کنندگان و فعالان اقتصادی می باشد. (Afarinesh, 5 January 2012)

[**šâyad** az in râh sude kalâni nasibe dolat šavad ammâ bevaqe in afzâyeše qimate dolâr fâtehei bar fa'liate tolid konandegân va fa'lâne eqtesâdi mibâšad]

[**Maybe** the state gets immense profits through this way, but in fact this increase in the price of dollar is an end to the activity of producers and economic activists.]

The American editorialists heavily overuse hedges by comparison with their Iranian counterpart. How do we explain this? For example, could it be that culture-specific attitudes and values give rise to the sharp differences between English and Persian editorials in terms of the use of this metadiscourse marker? Does this overuse have anything to do with rhetorical conventions? It may be the case that their overuse of hedges is partly due to rhetorical

conventions specific to American-English. Perhaps one thing that is safe to say at this point is that there exists a contrast between the rhetorical conventions in articulation of persuasion by means of hedges across two languages. It seems that American editorialists found appearing more considerate, attentive and polite towards their readers as a powerful strategy of persuasion. One other explanation for the preference for hedging of the propositional content by American editorialists more than their Iranian counterparts can be cultural backgrounds which are constructed by different values, conventions, beliefs and attitudes.

5. Conclusion

As regards the first research question of the study, findings revealed that the predominant metadiscourse category in editorials genre was interactional category and the predominant metadiscourse feature was attitude markers- a subcategory of interactional category. The overall findings from the study indicate that metadiscourse resources play a key role in the construction of persuasion in newspaper editorials. These findings also suggest that metadiscourse is an important device for communication with readers in both cultures. Moreover, the findings lend support to the idea that metadiscourse is not the unique feature of English language, but it is also a rhetorical feature of languages other than English. To deal with the second research question of the study it could be stated that regarding similarities, both English and Persian writers proved to put premium on the establishment of relationship with the readers more, relying less on textuality. That is, they employed interactional category more than interactive one. This indicates that in a persuasive genre like editorials, interactional metadiscourse plays a key role in persuading the readers. The findings were also interesting in that they revealed some similarities between two groups with regard to the use of some subcategories of metadiscourse. For instance, attitude markers were shown to be the most frequent subcategory in both sets of editorials. Frame markers, self-mentions and endophoric markers were respectively three less frequent subcategories in both groups. These similarities can be attributed to generic conventions i.e., editorials genre characteristics that seem to exhibit a certain uniformity across languages. In other words, although the precondition of acting within the same genre would not guarantee using the same preferred amount and type of metadiscourse cross-culturally, the similarities found between two groups of data showed that genre conventions entail the specialist writers have some preferences close to each other. Despite a relative uniformity of newspaper editorials in terms of metadiscourse use imposed by requirements and conventions of the genre, some significant intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of American and Iranian editorialists were found. For example, results showed that use of transitions, hedges, boosters, code glosses, evidentials, and frame markers differed across two languages which were apparently marking a cultural variation.

The present study as a contrastive rhetoric research has taken a step in the direction of cross-linguistic/ cross-cultural analysis of metadiscourse in newspaper genre. It is hoped that this study would give significant insights into the teaching of English as a foreign language in general and the teaching of writing in English in particular. The study will be beneficial for EFL students and their teachers in analyzing, understanding and correcting their intercultural linguistic problems in writing. The findings of the study can also be beneficial for translation area (both for teachers and students in translation courses and professional translators), as they clearly show how two languages differed rhetorically in the use of metadiscourse.

As with any other studies, ours is limited and as a result there is considerable potential for future research in this area. The relatively small number of the analysed editorials was one of the limitations of the study. Another practical problem of the study was the determination of metadiscourse markers in Persian corpus. Applying an analytical framework (Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse), which is originally presented in English, into Persian language and the fact that there are only few metadiscourse studies dealing with the Persian language made the analysis of the Persian data a complex and time-consuming process. Other studies can be done to (dis)confirm whether the predominant metadiscourse features reported in this study for English and Persian newspaper editorials are maintained in newspaper editorials written in other languages. Furthermore, the research outlined in the present study will, we hope, encourage an extension of research into the effect of making language learners' aware of the existing similarities and/ or discrepancies in the use of metadiscourse in their writings in English. Considering that

rhetorical devices are used differently across languages and cultures, it also seems that the study of the variations that metadiscursive resources may experience in the process of translation from English into Persian or other languages could be another area of investigation.

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